

tuck me in your covers, bring the colour back into my face

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by [acatalepsy](#)

Summary

“It’s okay. We’re not mad. I’m not mad at you,” Sapnap soothes, goes to put a hand on his shoulder, but he moves too fast and Quackity is convinced that this time, all of his good luck has run out. That this is it. When it all goes wrong. He recoils, trips over himself, elbows knocking painfully against the bannister behind him.

“Wait. *Stop*, stop — *Don’t fucking touch me.*”

“Sorry! Just — whatever you’re feeling right now, it can’t hurt you. Okay?”

—

Or: Quackity struggles with PTSD flashbacks after his *complicated* relationship with Schlatt and is very adamant that he is actually completely fine and doesn’t need any help from his fiancés *at all*.

Notes

q: what is ptsd i have literally never heard of her in my Life

lyric title is from 'eat sleep worry' by mree.

TWs: probably the most accurate description of panic attacks i've ever written, so ... yikes. ptsd, alcohol stuff, implied abuse. mind the tags :-)

made a new tumblr for mcyt stuff at 'walter-acatalepsy' !!!! go there n request some rpf h/c 'cause i need something to get out of my writing slump.

PSA — remember to meditate!!!! 5-10 minutes every day!!!! also put an ice-pack over your eyes when you have a panic attack!!!! dbt dive reflex gang rise up!!!

sweet holy mother of vent!fic. i highkey h8 this and it took a billion years to complete because after reaching 130k i had kind of a mental breakdown and subsequently lost the ability to write. or be a person. which is ironic because this is a fic about ptsd, but honestly ... i don't have wonderful fiancés. or anyone really. if you've read the ranboo fic, imagine that story except no one saves you.

in other less depressing news, internet goddess who i will One Day Yet Court lynn biskette literally referred to me as 'walter simp' this morning. which ... was a lot to process. but it checks out.

sometimes? love is meditating with the people you care about to help them regulate their nervous systems. and orange juice.

— walter

It's been a whole year since everything that happened between him and Schlatt. A *year*. So, by now one would think that he *would* be fine, or at least not thinking about it anymore, especially when he's got so much other shit to do. Which is why he doesn't know why this *keeps happening*.

It's a pretty crappy deal, actually. He just wants to get on with his life — now that he's engaged to his two best friends, who are nice, stable, (relatively stable), *normal* — but the problem is that just ... weird, random things make him anxious now. And he never sees it coming. One moment he'll be totally fine, hanging out in Kinoko, just messing around, or working on a project back in Las Nevadas, and the next something will *happen* and suddenly his heart will be racing in his chest like he's been fucking sprinting, palms sweating, feeling like he's going to fucking throw up or something.

It's disorienting and strange and — honestly, he doesn't really know why it happens. Mostly, it's just embarrassing. He's not a *pussy*. So, he'd rather not have his friends witness him losing his shit over someone clapping him on the back too suddenly while they're laughing, or coming up behind him and talking to him when he's not expecting it. He's fine. He can handle this on his own — even if it means randomly vanishing for stretches at a time just to go stand in a separate room and breathe, wait out whatever's *happening* to him, until his hands, for whatever reason, decide to stop shaking.

* * *

One of the first times he realises that this is actually a *thing* for him now is in Las Nevadas, when he's stocking up the latest casino they'd finished building. When he first devised his plan for the

city, from conception he always knew it was going to be primarily a place for gambling — *obviously*. What else? Naturally, that entails alcohol; taps flowing with *liquid gold, baby*. You can't exactly have a casino without drink to ply customers. And their wallets. That's how people work. It's just business.

However, surprisingly enough, not once during his evenings working on heaving crates into the bar, getting the place stocked for business, does he ever find himself struck with the desire to *sample the merchandise*. Which is ... a bit out of character for him, he knows. But recently — and he doesn't know *why* — he can't even get *near* other people drinking without his heart racing, unable to get it to stop. At first he thinks it's just some sort of weird, excuse the pun, *hangover* from his time spent with Schlatt where he's just kind of repulsed by the whole thing, for obvious reasons — which, yeah, *really* isn't great seeing as he's a fucking bar owner now. But once that initial, logical *distaste* seems to fade, the physical feelings in his body don't.

He's hoisting a barrel of bourbon up and onto a shelf for storage, when he accidentally fumbles his grip, manages to slop about a litre of whiskey *all* down his front, soaking his navy button-down — and despite the fact that it's cheap and watered-down, the smell alone hits him like a fucking brick wall. In fact, it's overwhelming enough that he spends the next two hours hunched over the kitchen sink, gripping onto the bench for dear life and vomiting up *everything* he'd eaten over the past twenty-four.

Instead of finishing up with the shipment like he'd planned, he uses the rest of the day attempting in vain to scrub the scent out of his skin with scalding hot water. But while the stale, sour aroma of liquor quickly fades to be replaced by something inordinately sweet, floral and woodsy — a kind of lavender soap gifted to him earlier in the year by Karl — he can't stop feeling so fucking *unclean* like he didn't really manage to get all of it off of him, phantom smells lingering for hours and hours, fogging up his brain.

When he's finally finished attacking his body with just about every *soap-adjacent* thing he can find, he retires to bed, exhausted, and he assumes his *little freak out* is over. But later that night, in total pitch darkness, he awakes at around three in the morning with absolutely no clue what's going on, what he spent that last week doing, or even the day prior; where he even is at all. It takes almost ten minutes to stop hyperventilating, looking around at his own bedroom walls like they're completely unfamiliar to him, like he's suddenly woken up in the house of a stranger, until he finally realises that he's just lying in his bed in Las Vegas and nothing bad is happening. Evidently, he just had some sort of *really* crappy dream he can't remember.

So he gets up, stumbles to the bathroom to get a glass of water — and is startled by his reflection staring back at him in the dim lantern-light. His arms are mottled with bruises, his eyes are ringed with dark smudges, and most alarmingly, there's dried blood caked beneath most of his fingernails, the backs of his hands *coated* with a tacky, rust-brown film that's quickly dried. It seems like *way too fucking much*, like a fucking crime-scene, but once he's rinsed his hands off in the sink, it becomes clear that it looked worse than it actually was, the culprit just a few scratches up the backs of his arms. Despite that, the whole thing is ... more than a little concerning. *Some fucking dream*.

The next day, he asks Sapnap and Punz to drop by and finish off the job, unload the rest of the shipment, stating that he's busy with — he waves his hand about vaguely — *something else*, that he has some other *prior engagement*. Which is a fucking lie. He's just ... He doesn't know what's wrong with him. It makes him so frustrated. This is supposed to be his fucking *kingdom*, his new enterprise, 'passion project', *whatever*. What kind of casino owner can't even handle having a couple drinks after work with friends, or spill a few drops of whiskey down his front without losing his fucking shit?

From that point onwards, typically what happens is that he tries to avoid anything that might trigger an *episode* wherever he can. And, yeah, maybe he's avoiding his friends *slightly* more than usual as well. He just — doesn't want them to think any differently of him if it happens. Because it's weird. Embarrassing. Mainly, he'd rather it not happen at *all* if he can help it. So he just pretends to be the person he always was — which feels like so much of a performance, he's surprised none of his friends have brought it up.

At one point he and George are hanging out together, when it happens and he just ... slips away like it's nothing.

They're just messing about and working on some maintenance projects in town while George recounts the details of some *really* fucking strange dreams he's been having recently about his best friend being *possessed* by a demon, trying to learn about the mortal realm with him as a medium or energy conduit or *something*. Honestly, the whole thing is just a bit *too* gay, even for him, so he's kind of zoned out at that point. The sun is just setting, dipping below the horizon and casting everything in a deep blue, and the first few mobs are starting to spawn in.

George yawns, stretches from where he's sitting cross-legged, iron axe glinting at his side, and valiantly continues. "Listen, listen, *listen* — It's not that I don't know if I'm awake or dreaming *exactly*. I can tell what's real or not. Uh, most of the time. But ... In the *moment*, when it's happening it just feels so ... so real that *maybe* ... I don't know. It just makes me wonder. It's stupid. What do you think?"

"I think ... You need to get a room."

"Screw you, I'm serious. They feel *different* to normal dreams. Other people are there too, you know! Like uh ..."

"Other people you want to *bone*?"

"No. *What?* No! Like — Listen, I don't know. It's like, I've seen *Wilbur* and —" George glares. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Quackity giggles *evilily*. "Man, you said it was other people you *didn't* want to fuck."

"I don't — *didn't* — want to *do that* with Wilbur!" George flushes.

"... So, what I'm hearing is you're *not* denying that you definitely have a thing for Dream." He laughs. "Got it. Let's fucking *go*."

George blinks, and then groans. "You're impossible."

"Aw, *Gogy*." He tuts. "It's okay. We've all been there."

Obviously, they haven't lit up the whole area with torches effectively enough because one moment Quackity is completely in the *zone* fucking with George and watching him get all stuttery and defensive and exponentially more British when he gets flustered, when suddenly George's eyes widen in *actual* alarm and he jumps up, *hurls* his axe end-over-end through the air just before there's a hiss, and an explosion to Quackity's left. The force of the blast propels him forward a few paces, and he takes a couple hearts of damage, stumbles, but other than that he's fine, it's just his pulse that's racing.

"Creeper?" He asks, half-dazed.

George is nodding, dusting himself off. “*Man*. That was close.”

There’s a small crater behind him, dirt blocks scattered about. And Quackity finds himself frozen in place, just kind of staring, before his gaze wanders idly back to George, who’s now retrieving his weapon. It feels a bit like he’s watching a movie.

“Hey. Are you okay?”

George is speaking. He thinks. It’s kind of ... murky, muted.

“... Q?”

And then in a sudden surge, his hearing returns to normal, his ears stop ringing, and he blinks out of whatever trance he was locked in.

“I’m fine. *Fuck* — that came out of nowhere.” He stuffs his trembling hands in his pockets, tries to feign an air of nonchalance. Which he’s actually pretty good at these days.

George laughs. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you that startled before. You’re *actually* good?”

“*Yes*. Prime, man. *Fuck* off.”

“I was kidding before, but honestly you look *kind of* like you’re gonna throw up.” George snorts.

“*Cállate, Gogy.*”

After that he *tries* to return his attention to their conversation, whatever he was doing, messing around and *roasting* George, but he just can’t seem to pick up where he left off. Nothing he says or hears makes sense, and he feels nauseous, and when he wrings his hands out he’s so acutely aware of the fact that he can’t feel them at all. So, despite the slightly confused look on George’s face, he quickly comes up with some incredibly clever excuse as to why he has to leave right then — that he’s got some vague, hand-wavy *Las Nevadas business* he has to attend to — and then wishes George good luck on his quest to psychoanalyse the content of his dreams, all the strange images tossed up by his subconscious with their *obviously* thinly veiled homoerotic subtext. And George watches him warily as he goes from behind his enormous tinted specs — the ones that Quackity suspects are less for ‘helping differentiate colours’ like he suggests, and more for what he assumes constitutes his idea of *fashion*. All the while, George doesn’t say anything at all.

The night is starless and the air is cold as Quackity stumbles through town, long grass whipping at his trousers as he keeps his fists still clenched in his pockets. And once he’s certain that he’s a far enough distance away that no one else is around, that he hasn’t been followed, and he’s in a well-lit enough area that he’s not going to be otherwise ambushed by a mob again, then he *finally* allows himself to collapse to his knees, presses his forehead to the night-damp grass and feels his whole body shake uncontrollably. And he can’t *breathe*, and he’s going to puke, and he’s going to die of a fucking *heart attack* — and wouldn’t that be an ironic way to go?

All his limbs are full of static, and every time the feeling starts to ebb and he thinks he’s *finally* going to be allowed to be okay again, trying to rationalise himself out of this feeling by repeating over and over again in his head that *nothing bad is happening, nothing’s actually wrong*, he finds himself violently wrenched back by another wave of panic. He doesn’t know what to do. It’s terrifying, and so all-consuming that he feels out of control, is convinced it’s *never going to end*. It’s like someone’s holding a weapon to his throat, like he’s going to die or go insane, that he’s completely losing his mind and he’ll never be able to find his way back. So he just stays like that, lying in the grass, unmoving, alone, for hours and *hours*, just trying to breathe, until the sun starts

to rise. And then — it *finally* passes. Leaves him almost as quickly as it came on. And he's fine. It's *fine*.

Everything is completely okay.

* * *

It's around five months later, of avoiding people, making excuses, dodging questions, panicking and getting sick over and over again, pretending everything's fine — when he's with Karl and Sapnap after they've actually managed to get him out of his house for once to hang out. They're all crowded around outside after a long day renovating the Library, when his newly acquired habit of his brain rebelling against his fucking body happens for the first time in front of them.

What's odd is, it actually seems like they might have already had somewhat of an idea of what's been going on with him before that point — although, Quackity doesn't have a clue *how*. They don't really ever bring up any of that period in his life with Schlatt, or any of the surrounding events; don't really make any sudden moves around him, don't drink around him, have stopped making loud noises or doing any bits that involve shouting in a way that seems just a *bit* too deliberate. Quackity never mentions this, or asks them about it directly, because he isn't sure he'd like what he hears.

They're standing outside on the dark-oak decking, admiring their handiwork, and sipping ice-cool glasses of orange juice. The evening is calm and quiet, save for the distant sound of crickets, running water, the pulsing, warbled hum of the Portal in the distance. And then Karl lets out a contented sigh.

“All in a hard day's work, hm?” He leans back in his chair, takes another swig of his drink.

“Are you kidding me?” Quackity laughs. “Man, you spent like, five hours just reading while watching and occasionally ordering us around. Fuck off.”

“I gave you words of encouragement. *That's* work. It's moral support!”

“Oh yeah?”

But as he's gesturing emphatically, regaling his many tales of times Karl very strategically provided ‘moral support’ instead of actually helping out with their projects, he's slightly *too* enthusiastic, and his elbow manages to catch the glass balanced on the ledge next to him, sending it teetering and then falling to the floor. Before he's able to catch it, it shatters, sending glass and juice everywhere.

Which really wouldn't be a big deal — but the sound is so *loud*, so unexpected, that Quackity can't help but jolt back, hunch his shoulders in discomfort.

Instead of that being it, though, and Karl and Sapnap just continuing to chat while he goes to go get a washcloth, dustpan or something, for some reason, Quackity finds his eyes squeezed shut, feeling tense, doesn't know what he's expecting — it's like someone's going to *scream* at him, something's going to hit him, that there's going to be *something*: a book, a fist, a flying bottle, he doesn't know. Even though his eyes are closed, and there's no more noise or movement, he's suddenly *convinced* he feels the air ever so subtly change near his face, flinches for a second time, *hard*. But no blow comes.

He blinks, tentatively opens his eyes.

Everything is just as it was before, but his friends — his *fiancés* — seem oddly far away, like he's

a few steps away from his body, unable to make sense of anything. All he knows is that something's *wrong*. He can't stop shaking, his body won't listen to him. Somehow that makes it all the more terrifying.

It's happening again, he dimly recognises. His fucking weird *thing* is happening again, but he can't move, can't leave to lock himself in a room somewhere and wait till these feelings pass alone like he always does — can't do *anything*. There's no warning this time, no creeping sensation of anxiety or dizziness, he just feels like he's been propelled right into the middle of it, freezing waves sweeping through him, like someone's continuously pouring ice cold water down the back of his neck.

There's a flurry of movement in his periphery, Karl moving to Sapnap's side, and he doesn't miss the look they exchange; a quick, silent conversation that takes place over mere seconds.

"Hey, hey — Quackity. Q? Listen," Sapnap starts gently, but firmly. "It's okay. You're okay."

"What am I doing? Prime. Sorry, guys. I'm so — I'm such a fucking *dumbass*. I'm so sorry. Shit. I'll clean this up. I swear. Just — just give me a minute. I just need a minute."

Even though part of him is completely freaking the *fuck out* and barely conscious, another part that's working almost completely independently is somehow still stringing together coherent sentences, still managing to apologise for being such a fuckup that he can't do anything right without breaking shit.

"It's okay. We're not mad. I'm not mad at you," Sapnap soothes, goes to put a hand on his shoulder, but he moves too fast and Quackity is convinced that this time, all of his good luck has run out. That this is it. When it all goes wrong. He recoils, trips over himself, elbows knocking painfully against the bannister behind him.

"Wait. Stop, stop — *Don't fucking touch me.*"

"Sorry! Just — whatever you're feeling right now, it can't hurt you. Okay?"

Everything smells like alcohol. It's like it's in his hair, his clothes. He doesn't know why. He doesn't know where he is.

"What the fuck, what the *fuck* —"

"Q, listen to me. You *have* to breathe."

All he knows is that he feels worthless, trapped. Everything is grey around the edges, blanched of colour and leaving streaky trails of light.

"I can't — I can't *see properly*. I feel ..." His eyelashes flutter and —

It feels like that moment just after getting injured, when you realise that actually, that's *a bit* more blood than you were prepared to see. He feels vomit rising in the back of his throat, and is dizzy, somehow light.

"... 'think I'm going to pass out.'"

"*Shit*. Okay, okay —" Karl dashes to his side, expression entirely too anxious, and even though Quackity flinches again, a hand gently wraps around his bicep, while another rests against his lower back — likely some sort of insurance for if he suddenly keels over. Eventually, he eases into the touch. "I've got you. Don't worry, I've got you."

“Here ...” Sapnap moves to help Karl, finds Quackity’s other side and brings an arm around his shoulders, and they slowly lower him down so that they’re sitting on the ground. Sapnap rests his head on his shoulder, and it’s comforting even though he can’t stop shuddering. “You’re okay.”

“I don’t know what’s happening.” Quackity stares at his hands, transfixed by the way he *knows* they’re in front of him, and yet can barely comprehend that they’re there through the thick webbing of static suddenly overtaking his vision.

“You’re breathing too much and it’s making you feel sick, man. Nothing else. You’re going to be fine.”

“Can you try holding it for seven seconds?” Karl asks. “Just seven?”

It’s probably good advice, but Quackity’s gaze keeps slipping in and out of focus, not quite able to land on anything around him. There’s just this feeling of immense *dread*. It’s like he’s awake, and somehow not, like his eyes are open, but he’s not actually seeing anything.

“I can’t. I don’t know where I am. I can’t understand — I can’t understand what I’m seeing. What the *hell*. I don’t know what’s going on. I can’t *remember how we got here or why I’m —*”

There’s a rustle from where Karl’s sitting at his left side, a blur of purple. The soft fabric of his jumper is pressed into his hands. “What about this? Can you feel this?”

“I can’t feel my fingers.”

He tries running his hands over Karl’s sleeve again and again, but there’s static creeping up his arms.

“That’s okay,” Karl reassures. “What *can* you feel?”

“Your sweater. It’s uh — warm, I think. *Fuck — I really, really can’t remember where I am. I don’t know —*”

“What about this?” Karl puts his hands over his, cool from the evening air.

“Your hands are cold.”

“And this?” He moves Quackity’s hands so that they’re flat, pressing against the icy wooden decking beneath them.

“The ground is very ... solid.”

“What can you hear?”

“You. My breath. The crickets.”

“We’re outside my Library. In Kinoko. It’s just me and Sapnap, here with you. No one else.”

“You’re safe,” Sapnap says into his shoulder. “We won’t let anything happen to you. Here —” He helps Quackity to his feet and they slowly make their way back inside, even though he still feels dizzy and sick. “Just watch me, okay?”

“Okay,” he says, not knowing what Sapnap’s doing as he moves about the room.

“Look, I’m locking all the doors. Can you see?”

“Yes ... Yeah, I can.” He can hear the click of every bolt as Sapnap slides it into place, watches as he latches each of the windows.

“You have your axe. I have my sword. We’re completely safe in here.”

Karl nods, not having left Quackity’s side as they move to sit down. “See? You’re *all* good, man.”

“Can you say that back to me?” Sapnap crouches in front of him, once he’s done, gaze searching his, slate-blue eyes darting back and forth. “We’re safe.”

“We’re — We’re safe,” he breathes, wipes his sweaty palms on his trousers. “Everything’s okay. All the windows and doors are locked. You guys have your weapons.”

It’s not like he *logically* thinks they’re in danger, that someone’s going to break in or they’re about to get ambushed by mobs or something, but each sentence weirdly makes him more calm, until suddenly his vision is back to normal, and he can breathe again. He thinks about the doors, locked and bolted, about the warmth of Sapnap and Karl’s bodies as they sit nearby, and he can see Sapnap’s diamond sword sheathed at his side in case he needs it.

“We love you, all right?” Sapnap squeezes his hand. “We won’t let anything happen to you.”

“Okay, okay —” Quackity says again, half to himself. He lets out a shaky breath, and *finally* feels slightly better. Usually these spells only last for an hour or so, but he can already feel the adrenaline starting to fade from his system, knows it’s coming to an end. “*Fuck.*” He presses his palms to his eyes. “Sorry. That was ... Not great.”

“How often does this happen?” Karl asks softly.

“Uh ... Often enough.”

Karl scrunches up his face.

“Maybe, once every couple of days? Every few days?”

“*Prime, Q.*” Sapnap wraps his arms around Quackity’s shoulders, solid and warm. And then Karl lies down on the couch as well, buries his face in the fabric of his shirt. And the pressure is nice, and grounding, so he just lies there and breathes — feels the rise and fall of Sapnap and Karl’s chests, the gentle thud of Sapnap’s heartbeat. “We’ve got you, man. Just close your eyes. Don’t think about anything else. You don’t need to.”

“I’m sorry, guys. I’m a fucking mess.” Quackity covers his face with his hands.

“Hey, come on.” Sapnap is gently running his hands through his hair. “Don’t talk about yourself like that.”

“We love you.” Karl kisses his nose, and then presses their faces together, so that he can feel the feather light brush of eyelashes against his skin.

They’re being so *kind* and Quackity, oddly enough, finds himself crying.

“It’s okay. You’re okay.”

“But —” Quackity chokes. “But I’m not the same as I used to be. There’s something *wrong* with me. I’m not a good person anymore.”

He wasn’t even expecting himself to say that last sentence. It just kind of slips out.

“I don’t understand.” Sapnap looks distraught. “Where is this coming from? What makes you think that?”

And suddenly he’s speaking more:

“I *break* things. I ruin things. I ruined our evening. *I’m so fucking sorry*. Everything’s so unpredictable, and we’re all going to *die*, and I’m wasting the precious few hours the people I love most in the world have by ... by forcing them to deal with this ... sad fucking *bullshit*. It’s selfish.”

“We’re not going to die, Q. We have so much life left; so, *so* many days. In fact, I’m sure you’ll get really goddamn sick of us by the time we’re all grouchy old men. That fear — that’s just the PTSD making you —”

Quackity grits his teeth, incredulous.

“*Yes, PTSD*. Just listen, man. Sometimes when bad things happen for a long enough time, your body gets so used to freaking out that when it’s all over, the feelings just ... keep hanging around, while your mind tries to come up with reasons for why the hell you feel that way, because it’s forgotten what happened in the first place. It’s trying to fill the gap.”

“I don’t — It wasn’t ... I haven’t —”

He *would* say that the things that have happened to him weren’t that bad, but — there’s also the small caveat that he can’t actually remember a lot of it.

“Q, these *weird* thoughts that we’re all going to die or something, or that you’re wasting our limited time — stuff like that is just ... justification for leftover fear, given words you think are your own. But thoughts aren’t *true*. I’ve been there. It’s just how your body *feels*, and how your mind interprets your body. Everyone is safe. *You’re safe*. Okay?”

“It doesn’t *matter*. It’s going to keep happening, Sap. This isn’t going to just go away and — I can’t *trap* you guys in something like that. It’s not just going to ... stop. I’m scared that — that I’m never going to be okay again. This has been happening for so long.”

“We can help you, all right?” Sapnap turns to look at Karl, who nods quickly, snuggles in closer, wrapping his arms around Quackity’s stomach. “There are ways we can get these panic attacks under control. We’ll figure it out. You don’t have to worry. We’re here.”

“We have *so much time left*,” Karl says. “Good, bad, *shit*, we want to spend all of it with *you*, you big dummy. What makes you think we’ll just let you make that decision for us?”

“*Prime*. Why does that *appeal* to you?” Quackity snuffles, head falling back against the couch cushions. “I’m engaged to a couple of *idiots*.”

“It must be such a heavy burden to carry, loving us,” Sapnap shakes his head fondly, and then presses a gentle kiss to his forehead.

That night the three of them all fall asleep side-by-side amidst an obnoxious amount of pillows, Karl splayed out taking up a quite frankly *unfair* amount of the mattress, Sapnap curled around the two of them protectively. And when Quackity wakes up in the middle of the night, shivering and sweating and disoriented, no one complains; Sapnap just retrieves an ice-pack from the refrigerator that he wraps in a soft tea-towel, and helps him hold it over his eyes until the cold slows his heart-rate, brings him back to his body again. As they all drift off for a second time, Karl huddles up against his side, traces patterns on the back of his hands.

* * *

Just a month later, things have already managed to settle into a comfortable rhythm. Turns out, not even Quackity, the master of deflection that he is, is able to hide anything from his fiancés for *that* long, and now that his unfortunate *condition* — which Sarnap keeps *insisting* is PTSD — has been made apparent, they are not willing to just let it go. Suddenly his schedule is crowded with meditating; taking all the weird potions and various other *concoctions* Karl sends his way; going to events around the Server that Sarnap manages to coax him into attending, actually leaving the house and going out even when he *really* doesn't feel like it.

““You taken your meds today?” Sarnap’s arms snake around his waist as Quackity hunches over a crafting table one weekend, throwing together a new pickaxe.

“... Sure.”

“Q.” He pulls away.

“I got distracted, okay?” Quackity groans. “Prime. Look — I’m going, I’m *going*. Bossy.”

“Karl spends *hours* over brewing stands trying to get these right, the least you can do is remember to take them.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“We *will* make you sleep on the couch, you know.” Sarnap kisses him on the cheek gently, before pulling back, gaze stern. “Take your pills.”

Quackity folds his arms across his chest, *trudges off* to go look through their medicine cabinet.

“I love you!” Sarnap calls after him.

“I love you, too. But you’re still *bossy*.”

As he sorts through glass vials and little orange pill bottles, Quackity tries to act annoyed, grumpy about all the *hovering*, but as much as he’d like to feel that way, he really, really doesn’t.

* * *

It’s a cool summer’s day, and it’s dark behind Quackity’s eyelids.

He can feel the movement of his breath rushing in and out of his lungs, the rise and fall of his chest. His weight on the ground, the soft grass beneath him. The feel of the backs of his hands resting gently on the knees of his trousers. A stream gurgles in the distance, cicadas hum, Karl coughs lightly. The air smells like spring, sea-salt carried from the coast. And his mind is clear, and empty.

Fifteen minutes have passed, when suddenly a shadow unexpectedly falls over his face and Quackity blinks his eyes open; squints, dazed, slowly dredging himself out of his calm, half-dreamlike state.

“What are you guys doing?”

“... George?”

“What is this?” He looks around at them, hands on his hips, observing how they’re all sitting in a vaguely circular configuration. “Are you summoning Herobrine?”

“Meditating.” Karl stretches his arms above his head, cracks his back, yawns.

“Meditating?” George lets out a startled laugh from where he’s standing over them, axe hanging at his side. “*Why?*”

“It improves reaction time,” Sapnap says at the same time as Karl says: “Prevents memory loss.”

George casts his gaze over to Quackity who’s just been remaining silent this whole time, unsure what to say, before he decides to give back a wordless shrug.

“Is this some sort of ... weird fiancé-bonding-ritual?”

Sapnap frowns.

George continues, slightly perturbed: “... Is this a *sex thing?*”

Somehow, in Quackity’s head, ‘*my fiancés are helping me out with trying to wrangle my PTSD into submission*’ is even *more* embarrassing than if it *were* some sort of weird pre-sex-ritual.

“Hey, *Gogy*,” he finally thinks to say, his mind miraculously coming back online. “Speaking of! How are those *incredibly vivid dreams* you’ve been having about Dream going?”

George blushes. “Uh —“

Karl raises an eyebrow, with a faint sort of curiosity and a smirk, and Quackity swivels his body to face him and Sapnap a bit more.

“George’s been telling me all about how his dreams have just been really *visceral* lately, you know? How he just can’t get Dream out of his head every time his pretty head hits the pillow.”

“Oh, I hear that, man.” Sapnap nods sympathetically. “*Totally* get it. Before I proposed to these guys? It was *rough*.”

“You’re making it sound *weird*,” George splutters. “It’s not weird! I swear, I —“

Quackity ploughs on. “How often did you say you were dreaming about him again? That it had increased to *most nights* now? Or ... was it *every* night? Help me out here, man. I don’t really —”

“*Goodbye*, Quackity. Karl, Sapnap.” George rolls his eyes, inclines his head to the others in acknowledgment, face aglow with embarrassment, and stomps off, through the grass.

“I know it’s *me* here, but ... Do you guys think that was too much?” Quackity finally begins when he’s out of ear-shot, looks around at his fiancés, who both shake their heads dismissively.

“So, what do you want to do now? Where we left off?” Karl leans back on his palms. “Or should we do like, a body scan or guided visualisation?”

“‘Five Senses’ is clearly better,” Sapnap mutters.

“Q?”

“Uh. Sapnap is right. Sorry Karl.”

“You guys *suck*.” Karl huffs, collapses back into the grass.

Sapnap laughs. “Because we’re right?”

“Because you don’t appreciate my unique flair for storytelling.” Karl yanks out a fistful of grass and daises and chucks it at Sapnap.

“You can still guide the senses one,” Quackity suggests.

“*Thank you.* See, Sap? At least Q appreciates me.”

Sapnap leans in, pecks Karl on the cheek, before whispering close to his ear, loud enough that Quackity can still hear it: “*Don’t push it, darling.*”

And Quackity laughs, long and bright, as Sapnap shuffles back over to his side and lays his head in his lap. For the first time in a long time he feels like things might just end up being *okay*.

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